THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit http://www.djreprints.com.

http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-feds-wont-rate-my-college-1443485251

OPINION | COMMENTARY

The Feds Won't Rate My College

The Obama administration's College Scorecard left out Hillsdale and other institutions that forgo federal funding.

Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Mich. *PHOTO: EXTERNAL AFFAIRS*

By **DAVID WHALEN**

Sept. 28, 2015 8:07 p.m. ET

When the Education Department earlier this month released its College Scorecard—a data tool that replaces President Obama's original plan to assign ratings to schools—several colleges weren't included. Parents of high-school students may want to note the omission before relying on the resource for thorough, unbiased information about educational options.

According to the online scorecard, Hillsdale College, an accredited liberal-arts college in Michigan, where I teach, doesn't exist. You won't find it on the scorecard by exploring programs the school offers—a four-year degree in history, for instance—or through the advanced-search function. Even punching in the ZIP Code yields no trace. The college hardly sneaked up on anyone: Hillsdale, founded by abolitionists in 1844, predates the

Education Department by 135 years.

A reporter for the campus newspaper called the Education Department to ask for an explanation. Denise Horn, assistant press secretary, told her: “Hillsdale does offer bachelor’s degrees; however, because the plurality of degrees it awards are certificates, not two-year or four-year degrees, it was not included on the scorecard at launch.”

This is utterly false. Hillsdale College issues four-year undergraduate degrees in 31 disciplines as well as postgraduate degrees; it doesn’t offer any certificates for academic credit.

A more plausible explanation for the government’s exclusion of Hillsdale: The college doesn’t accept any form of taxpayer assistance, and it doesn’t participate in Title IV federal financial-aid programs and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems, which require institutions to track and report racial demographics.

Hillsdale, the first U.S. college to prohibit by charter discrimination based on race or sex, refuses to count students by skin color.

The college has attempted to report other data—financial information and retention rates, for example—but the Education Department won’t accept submissions that don’t include race-based tallies. (Why the department spun a tale about certificates instead of mentioning this fact, I don’t know.) Other college ranking systems—U.S. News & World Report, the Princeton Review, among others—are happy to accept the trove of other data that Hillsdale records.

It’s not as though the scorecard requires every data point to be supplied. If other schools on the list didn’t report a piece of information the government sought, the scorecard simply says “unavailable.”

The only other schools notably absent from the scorecard are the handful that join Hillsdale in forgoing federal funding, including Grove City College in Pennsylvania.

A less charitable explanation for Hillsdale’s exclusion: The Obama administration’s Education Department wants to avoid informing parents and high-school students about a college that is known for its conservative outlook and its emphasis on a classical liberal-arts education.

I’m confident that students seeking such an education will find us. But if the Education Department means to create a useful website, then it should include all four-year

colleges, not just the government's financial dependents.

Mr. Whalen is the provost and a professor of English at Hillsdale College in Michigan.

Copyright 2014 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our Subscriber Agreement and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit www.djreprints.com.